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SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DS/IP/SA  
LONDON FOR POL - REIDEL  
TREASURY FOR GENERAL COUNSEL/DAUFHASUER AND DAS FOR  
TERRORISM AND VIOLENT CRIMES/JZARATE  
JUSTICE FOR OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL/DLAUFMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [NP](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: MAOISTS CALL INDEFINITE SCHOOL STRIKE  
STARTING DECEMBER 9

#### Summary

1. The Maoist student arm, All-Nepal National Free Student Union-Revolutionary, called for an indefinite school strike (or bandh) in Kathmandu Valley starting on December 9th. The Maoists are asking the Government of Nepal meet thirteen demands to avert the strike. The Government has neither made a plan to counter the strike nor has it opened negotiations. Today, the Maoists floated an offer to drop the strike, if the Government removed the ban on their organization and their designation as terrorists. The Lincoln School, attended by most of the mission's dependent children, intends to hold class but has established alternate locations as a contingency. End Summary.

#### Threatening Children

2. The Maoist-controlled, All-Nepal National Free Student Union-Revolutionary (ANNFSU-R), an illegal organization, has declared an indefinite school strike (or bandh) in Kathmandu Valley starting December 9. The Maoist student union put forward thirteen demands it says the government must meet to avert the strike. The demands made under the theme, "stop the commercialization of the education system," include a fifty percent reduction in private and boarding school tuition, the elimination of Sanskrit education, job security for teachers, and increasing government funding for Tribhuvan University. The students warn they will enforce school closures Valley-wide, threatening the safety of students, teachers, administrators, and facilities. The group has also called for nationwide school bandhs for December 11 through the 13.

#### The Government's Silence

3. Nepal's Ministry of Education and the Association for Private and Boarding Schools of Nepal (PABSON) have called for the Maoists to lift the bandh threat. They have not issued a response to the Maoist demands. Education institutions in the Valley, in the absence of any security directives by the Government, have put into action contingency plans by running classes on Saturdays (the traditional day off), holding end of term examinations early, or adjourning early for winter vacation. The local British School and French School, attended by a mix of expatriates and Nepalese, plan to remain open during the first week of the scheduled bandh and cancel some of their after school activities. The Lincoln School, attended by most of the mission's dependent children and a number of Nepalese, intends to hold class but has established alternate locations as a contingency.

4. On November 29, the Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Education and Sports, Mr. Yuba Raj Pandey, hosted a meeting of concerned teacher and education organizations near Singha Durbar, the Prime Minister's office. The intent was to coordinate actions to address the indefinite education bandh. As the event closed, two members of the ANNFSU-R brazenly rushed Mr. Pandey with a handgun and threatened to shoot him if he did not take seriously their thirteen demands. The students painted Mr. Pandey's face black and fled, waving the gun at the stunned crowd.

5. On December 2, Devi Prasad Ojha, Minister of Education and Sports, at a press conference called on donors to help resolve the indefinite strike. When questioned by the press corps on the Ministry's position, Mr. Ojha is quoted as saying, "I'm not in a position to comment on the strikes within the education sector. . . . We want all educational institutions to run smoothly and be free from politics."

#### Maoists May Relent

6. The Nepalese press and public responded with widespread anger to the threat to their children's safety. In recent

days, the ANNFSU-R appears to have softened its stance. A December 3 press article quotes Devendra Parajuli, leader of ANNFSU-R, as saying, "We may give second thoughts to forcing the closure of educational institutions, if the government corrects the mistake of declaring us a terrorist body and shows it is ready for talks with us." (Note: The previous government banned the ANNFSU-R organization in 2001, labeling it terrorist after the collapse of peace talks in November 2001. End note.) The Government has not commented openly on this latest development. The ANNFSU-R stated today that no talks are underway with the Government. The softening of the student group's demands has further confused school administrators and parents, leaving some institutions to defer a definitive decision until the weekend.

Comment

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17. Education, particularly in the Valley, is perceived as the gateway to a better life for one's children and a guaranteed right under the Constitution. The situation exposes the Government's powerlessness and inability to develop a coherent plan of action and the Maoists' continued callous disregard for the welfare and security of children.  
MALINOWSKI